



## Editorial

Welcome to issue 46 of AMERC News - which doubles as **Circular 260** and, as such, must be circulated to all GMDSS instructors/ examiners by their AMERC centre contact.

In this issue we have the our usual brief on the most recent **Maritime Consultancy Group** (MCG - Page 2) - reflecting relevant items covered in the AMERC Executive Committee (EC) meeting earlier that day and including: an update of the use of **TRANSAS touch-screen simulators**; a note regarding **Course Approvals Certificates** from the MCA; a follow-up item regarding the future process for **developing new examination papers and the role of the Examiner's Panel**; an item on **new members accepted at AGM**; a plea from the NAC regarding **problems with Application Forms**; an update of the revised **Role of the Chief Examiner**; and the **date of AGM and Examiner's Panel 2014**.

We are (again) missing any **Member Profile** – but we repeat the ad' for a **GMDSS Instructor vacancy for Member UKSA in the Isle of Wight** (A UKSA Member profile was included in Issue 38).

We do have another '**GMDSS Criss-Crossword**' (Page 3) to help stretch candidates' knowledge of **international geography** and the use of **Admiralty List of Radio Signals (ALRS)** publications. The answers to puzzle 45 are also included.

**Explanation Please?** is taking a rest for this issue – either there are no current problems, or everyone is dumbstruck by recent events?

**Tales from the Key-Side** (Page 4) brings an abbreviated, first-hand account of the Wick Radio/GKR distress radio communications that took place twenty-five years ago – July 1988 - when the Piper Alpha platform became the single most serious maritime disaster in the North Sea oil fields.

**Maritime Miscellaneous** (page 5-6) features a review of the latest edition of the **International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue (IAMSAR) Manual, Vol III** - recently released in both paper form and as an e-book for the IMO Bookshelf.

The **GMDSS instructor vacancy at UKSA** on the Isle of Wight has not yet been filled and is repeated in this issue (page 7). Also on that page is a 'wanted' ad' for ICS DSC 2 equipment – if you have any going spare?

As usual – my sincere thanks to those of you who've provided feedback, tales, questions and other information for including in the News – **and to the Executive Committee for giving me a second three-year term as Editor J**

Sláinte!

*Ian W*

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**[A reminder that the IMO Master Plan of shore-based facilities for the GMDSS \(GMDSS Master Plan\) has been posted on the USCG website as Circular 14, and can be downloaded using this link – and that this is a limited-time offer!](#)**

The **Maritime Consultation Group (MCG)** meets regularly – currently four times each year – for the AMERC Executive Committee ‘Open Meeting’. MCG membership consists of AMERC Executive Committee (EC) representatives; the AMERC Chief Examiner; the MCA Chief Examiner and/or the MCA Deck & GMDSS Team Leader; and AMERC/industry specialists.

The latest meeting followed our **Annual General Meeting (AGM)** and **Examiner’s Panel** in Manchester in June. The following items reflect discussions at MCG; AGM/Examiner’s panel; and/or associated items that are of immediate interest to Members and training centres (full minutes will be circulated appropriately). The items are placed according to size - not in any ‘priority’ order!

**Transas touch-screen simulation:** The Group agreed, in principle, that touch screen simulation could be allowed on AMERC-approved GMDSS training simulators. The decision on the use of touch-screen simulation technology is still to be finalised and formally ratified.

**Course Approval Certificate (CAC).** A reminder to all course providers – separate certificates are issued for GOC and for ROC course approvals. *When you receive your new CAC(s) from the MCA, you need to inform the Secretary so that he can ‘close the loop’.*

**Future Examination Paper process:** As stated at Examiner’s Panel – future examination papers will be fully written and reviewed by a small group, under the direction of the Chief Examiner, to ensure that papers presented to Examiner’s Panel will not require significant change before implementation.

**New Members:** Two organisations were approved as Full Members, and one for Associate Membership, at AGM. [The list of members can be found through this link.](#) For details on how to join, use the [membership application process at this link.](#)

**Application Forms – NAC issues:** The NAC has experienced a number of problems with application forms, and asks that centres and examiners ensure that the following is adhered to for all applications:

- \* Personal details should be the same on all applications, i.e. original and re-sits. For example – there should be no variation in height/age etc;
- \* Photographs to be fastened to the form so that no damage is done to the image, even face-to-face can cause damage. Must meet UK passport agency standards – **which includes ‘professionally printed’** – not ‘at home’ ([in line with UK passport requirement – follow this link if in doubt](#));
- \* Application forms must be one sheet, double sided, not two single pages, i.e. candidate’s results need to be on the back of that candidate’s front page;
- \* All written information must be clear and legible – the candidate is familiar with his details, NAC are not; and
- \* shortened names, e.g. ‘Tim’ ‘Rob’ must not be used. We must have the full name as used on all official documents, not preferred name.

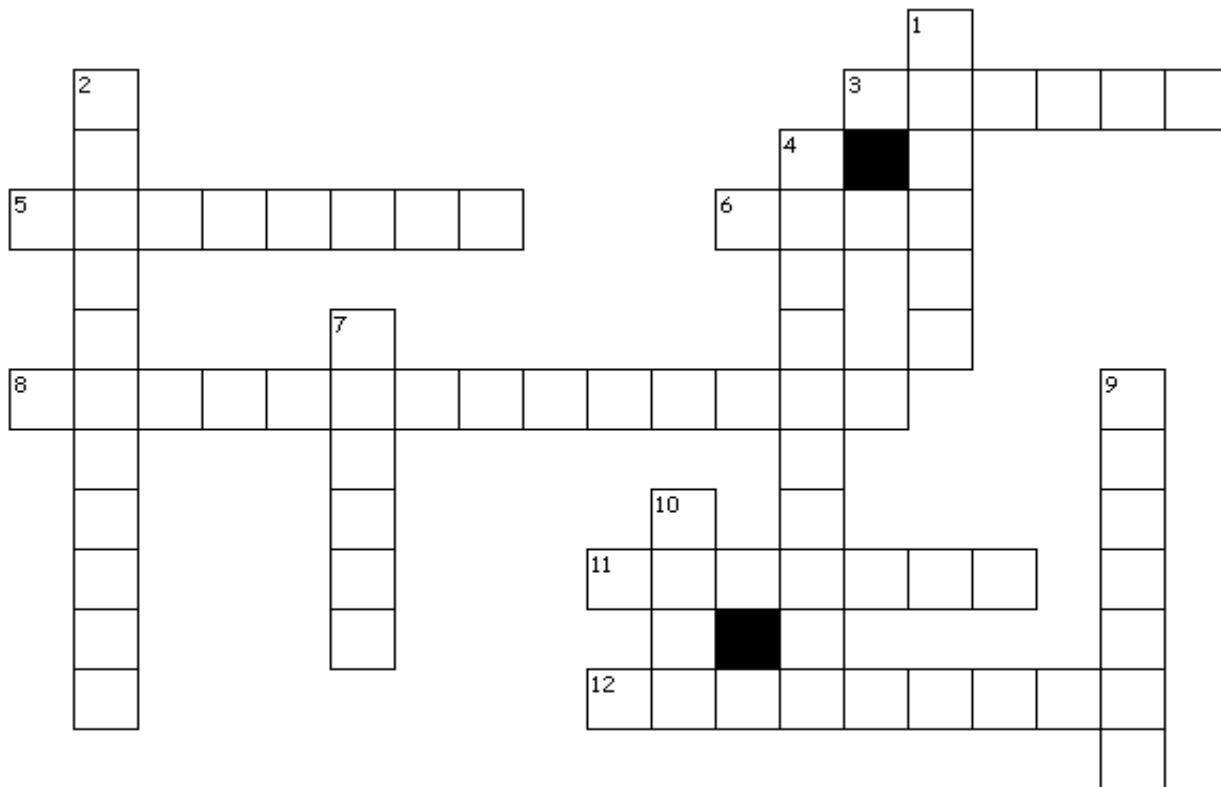
**Chief Examiner role:** The Chief Examiner will no longer have a Deputy Chief Examiner, and the post of Assistant Chief Examiner (Overseas) has also been discontinued.

**AGM & Examiner’s Panel 2014** – will be held on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> June. Venue to be confirmed.

**GMDSS Examination Statistics – quarterly report:** National Administration Centre (NAC) examination statistics for the period **1 January 2013 – 29 March 2013** are shown below:

EXAMINATION	ENTERED (1 <sup>st</sup> time)	PASSED (1 <sup>st</sup> attempt)	% PASSED 1 <sup>ST</sup> ATTEMPT
UK GOC	328 (277)	264 (223)	223/277 (>80%)
ALL GOC	753 (647)	626 (534)	534/647 (>82%)
UK ROC	49 (47)	49 (47)	47/ 47 (100%)
ALL ROC	85 (83)	85 (83)	83/83 (100%)
LRC	21 (21)	21 (21)	21/ 21 (100%)

**GMDSS Criss-Crossword Number 46** - all answers should be researched and/or confirmed by reference to ALRS, *where appropriate*



**Down**

1. River on which 12-across is situated.
2. One of the two HF DSC stations providing radio distress watch for Australian waters.
4. Chilean NAVTEX station using ID letter Charlie for their English-language service.
7. Country hosting Sat-C AORE LES with ID '121'.
9. Phoneticised ID letter for **national** language NAVTEX broadcasts from 4-down.
10. Phoneticised ID letter for NAVTEX station covering 11-across.

**Across**

3. Strait separating Russia's Chukotskiy Peninsula from Alaska.
5. Island state of the Commonwealth of Australia.
6. Strait separating (Tasmania) from the Australian continent.
8. Inmarsat 2-digit (Short Access Code) 41 is used to forward this type of routine report.
11. Largest port in Cyprus.
12. Principal ferry port on 5-across.

**Issue 45 answers: DOWN:** 4. 1. Kongsvegpasset; 2. Svalbard; 3. Bulgaria; 6. Antwerpen; 8. Tiksi.  
**ACROSS:** 4. Suva; 5. Hamhung; 7. LaGuelette; 9. Fiji; 10. Varna; 11. Stavanger; 12. Eik.

This is the page for your stories – whether from personal experience at sea, at work, in the classroom or life generally – recent past or distant past. Or it may be something you've heard. Doesn't matter – we're looking for interesting, funny or informative stories that may make us laugh, cry or look for someone to hit. Submissions may be edited. Contributors' names will be withheld on request.

**Dateline:** Wick Radio/GKR – 6<sup>th</sup> July 1988 (25 years ago)  
**'Time:** 2101 UTC and counting ...  
**Frequency:** 2182kHz – R/O Eoin Kerr on watch

<b>Time G.M.T.</b>	<b>Station To</b>	<b>Station from</b>	<b>Message</b>
06/2101	Mayday	Lowland Cavalier	<i>explosion onboard Piper-A – no numbers of personnel known as yet (R)</i>

*[a rapid exchange of calls, and then]*

06/2105	Mayday	<u><a href="#">Piper Alpha</a></u>	<i>We are abandoning Rig (R)</i>
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In the fifteen minutes following those original calls GKR received ETAs from Resolution, Grampian Queen, OSA Lerwick, Tharos, Colne Kestrel, Huddersfield Town (via Sedco 707), Deventel, British Magnus, Star Spica, Cam Panther, Sandhaven, British Enterprise 3, and British Magnus ... at 2126 GKR broadcast a further Mayday Relay which resulted in ETAs from Iolair, Helena, Oil Challenger, Santa Fe 135, Ability, Oil Chieftain, DEDF, Maersk Rover, TS 51 Safe and Sulair. At 2139 Tharos reported 1 person recovered. Further offers of assistance came through the night. Piper-A's on-duty Radio Officer was one of five persons forced to abandon by leaping, from the helideck, into the burning sea 175ft below – three died on impact. Fast Rescue Craft from standby vessels Sandhaven and Silver Pit rescued a number of survivors, delivering them back to their parent vessels, before Sandhaven's FRC was blasted by another explosion - killing two of the three FRC crew and the six survivors they'd just pulled from the carnage. Intense radio activity continued throughout the night. Broadcast action on 2182kHz was suspended at 07/1035UTC.

*[with thanks to ex-GKR R/O Eoin Kerr – who responded to those original calls and continued to handle the emergency traffic throughout the night - for his first-hand account of the radio traffic]*

**Dateline:** Aberdeen – some years later – sitting in the car, on Aberdeen seafront ...  
**Time:** 1700 (news bulletin)  
**Frequency:** 96.9 FM - Radio North Sound, Aberdeen

*“Today, at memorial services in Aberdeen and offshore, the 167 men who perished in the Piper Alpha disaster were remembered ...”*

*[cut to Kirk of St Nicholas congregation singing the Naval hymn ... ]*

*“Eternal Father, strong to save, whose arm doth bind the restless wave,  
Who bidd'st the mighty ocean deep its own appointed limits keep;  
O hear us when we cry to Thee, for those in peril on the sea ... ”*

[Got a Tale to tell? Got a Question? Want to say something?](#)  
[Click on this link to the AMERC Website to generate a message to the AMERC News Editor.](#)

**Maritime Miscellaneous 1: The 2013 Edition of the International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue (IAMSAR) Manual - Volume III** – which must be carried onboard all SOLAS vessels, is now available in both hard-copy and E-BOOK download (for your IMO Bookshelf).



I was pleased to receive the latest edition of IAMSAR Manual Volume III recently. The publication is available in both hard-copy and (electronic book) download - for use on your [‘IMO Bookshelf’](#).

The IAMSAR Manual is updated and a new version published every three years. This latest (2013) Edition incorporates the 2012 amendments - adopted by ICAO (the International Civil Aviation Organisation); and approved by the Maritime Safety Committee of the IMO (the International Maritime Organisation) at its 87<sup>th</sup> session in May 2010 - and entered into force on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2011; and also the 2011 and 2012 amendments (adopted by ICAO and approved by the IMO’s Maritime Safety Committee at its 90<sup>th</sup> session in May 2012, and entered into force on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2013). All amendments were endorsed by the IMO Sub-Committee on Radiocommunications and Search and Rescue (COMSAR) at its 14<sup>th</sup> session in March 2010; the 15<sup>th</sup> session in March 2011; and 16<sup>th</sup> session in March 2012, as appropriate.

### **IAMSAR Manual Volume III – to be carried onboard – is in four sections:**

**Section 1 (Overview)** – covering: responsibilities and obligations to assist; SAR co-ordination; national and regional SAR system organisation; ship reporting systems and vessel tracking; aircraft reporting system; and underwater SAR;

**Section 2 (Rendering Assistance)** – covering: initial action by assisting craft; search function; rescue function, including rescue plan and message; assistance by SAR aircraft; helicopter operations; and rescue by maritime/land facilities; care of survivors; handling of deceased persons and contact with the media); and other assistance; and training for Masters and officers of merchant ships. – and the role of crew members, deck officers, radio operators, lookouts, crews of rescue boats and first aiders;

**Section 3 (On-scene co-ordination)** – covers: co-ordination of SAR operations; communications (on-scene and SAR communications); planning and conducting the search; and conclusion of search; and

**Section 4 (on-board emergencies)** – covering: distress alert notification; methods of alert; medical assistance to vessels/MEDEVAC; man overboard; and ship/aircraft emergencies at sea.

The four main sections are followed by Appendix A-G, themselves covering:

A – Distress situations – obligations and procedures;

B – Sample SAR message;

C – Factors affecting observer effectiveness;

D – Standard format for SAR Situation Report (SITREP);

E – SAR briefing and debriefing form;

F and G – examples of action cards – which themselves are now included as additional pull-out cards, following Appendix G, in the latest (hard copy) edition of IAMSAR Volume III.

Although a number of books must be carried onboard, mariner's may feel that many contain a wealth of background information which might not be considered 'essential reading'. IAMSAR Manual Volume III should be read cover-to-cover by all officers who have responsibility for shipboard operations – and by all crew members who might be involved in any aspect of SAR operations.

[A reminder that the e-book reader 'IMO Bookshelf' is available as a free download from this link. One of the benefits of this process is that you don't have to wait for delivery of a paper version – you can download from the internet and read 'on screen'. The other benefit is the ability to 'search' any document to find reference to any particular word or phrase.](#)



The IMO has also produced an additional, A4, card - **'Guidance on GMDSS Distress Alerts'** - shown opposite - and available for purchase as a separate item.

This card is described as “a tough plastic lamination on which you can write the ship’s name, call sign and MMSI with any pen; and which has strips of double-sided adhesive tape on the back to make the card easy to display on ships’ bridges and other suitable locations”.

***Maritime Miscellaneous 2:***

**Item:** GMDSS INSTRUCTOR VACANCY.

**Location:** UKSA, Isle of Wight

**Information:** A vacancy for a FULL TIME GOC / ROC INSTRUCTOR will arise at the UKSA in COWES on the Isle of Wight in the near future.

This will be a FULL TIME position with the successful candidate teaching between 20 and 25 courses a year on site at Cowes as a full time employee of the UKSA.

Training can be given however preference may be given to someone with previous experience in this field.

A competitive (industry standard) salary and employment terms will be offered upon completion of training.

Assistance with some re-location expenses may be available for the right applicant.

For further details or an informal discussion please contact:

**Suzanne Hopkins**  
[personnel@uksa.org](mailto:personnel@uksa.org)  
**Tel +44 (0)1983 294941**

The UKSA is an equal opportunities employer and a registered charity.

**Ends:**

Editor's Note: A UKSA Member Profile was included in [AMERC News issue 38 \(August 2011\)](#)

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Wanted - ANY redundant ICS DSC2 equipment, i.e. DSC2 touch screen Control Panels and any "gold box" interfaces, please contact Paul Martin 07768 492562 or [www.gmdss.biz](http://www.gmdss.biz)